

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Opening Doors to China

Standard: I. Culture
III. People, Places, and Environment
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Analyze John Hay's *Open Door Note*
- Interpret political cartoons
- Assess the diplomatic implications of foreign actions in China

Time: 1–2 class periods (depending on activities selected)

Materials: Documents: 1899 *The First Open Door Note*

Resources: Reading: *Secretary of State John Hay and the Open Door in China*
<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/HayandChina>

Reading: *Explanation of a French political cartoon*
<http://www.gpuri.com/images/413/41332.jpg.htm>

Reading: "A Fair Field and No Favor!" Cartoon
<http://www.harpweek.com/09cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Month=November&Date=18>

Map: Western Sphere of Influence in China

Exercises: *Political Cartoon: "A Fair Field and No Favor"*
Political Cartoon: "Open Door Policy in China"
"The Open Door" (Blank Cartoon)
Symbols for a Political Cartoon

Materials: Scissors and glue or tape
Colored pencils

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

The United States became more interested in Asian affairs when, as a result of the Spanish-American war, it took possession of the Philippines. President McKinley and others feared that the United States might lose trade options in China due to the established European presence. As a result, the Americans wanted an "open door" to allow all nations to trade within the Chinese "spheres of influence" already claimed by France, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, and Japan. President McKinley instructed Secretary of State John Hay to write a series of diplomatic notes to arrange for all to profit from the economic division of China.

This is the first of Hay's Open Door notes. It was sent to Germany, but similar notes were delivered to the other nations. Andrew D. White was the U.S. Ambassador to Germany.

Activity 1: "The First Open Door Note"

- 1.** Distribute copies of the document, *The First Open Door Note*.
- 2.** Have student read the document and identify the terms of the Note.
 - a.** What is Hay asking each nation to do?
 - b.** What appears to be the motive of the United States with this proposal?
 - c.** If you were a leader/representative of Germany, or any of the other countries involved, how might you respond to John Hay's Note?
 - d.** Hay publicly declared that all nations agreed to the Open Door Note, which was not the case. Essentially, other countries just shrugged off or evaded the pronouncement. However, the "spheres of influence" remained open to others and the European countries did not attempt to claim parts of China as colonies or possessions, relying instead on the economic gains as established. Were Jay's pronouncements "much ado about nothing," or did they indirectly set the tone for the future treatment of China? Or were the Europeans just not as capable of expanding empires at this point in history? Did the Note display a course of nonintervention or intervention by the United States regarding China? Does the Note represent imperialism in action? Discuss these questions and assign student research if necessary (time permitting).

Activity 2: Map of Spheres of Influence

- 1.** Refer students to the map, "Spheres of Influence in China."
 - a.** Identify the countries with spheres of influence.
 - b.** Which non-Western country had a presence in China? (Additional research could be done to explain what was happening in Japan at this time.)
 - c.** Of course, each country has a coastal sphere of influence. How far into the interior did the Europeans and Japanese venture? For what reasons might they have done so?
 - d.** Identify cities in the spheres that are major Chinese metropolitan areas today.

Activity 3: Interpreting Political Cartoons

- 1.** At this juncture, the teacher has options to consider. There are two political cartoons available for students to analyze. In addition, Activity 4 has students "assemble" their own political cartoons.
 - a.** The teacher may use one or both of the political cartoons for analysis, then have students do Activity 4.
 - b.** The teacher may have students create their own cartoons (Activity 4) if the discussion of the First Open Door Note provided sufficient background information.
 - c.** The teacher may use the political cartoons provided and skip Activity 4.

- 2.** Provide students with either or both of the political cartoons, "A Fair Field and No Favor" and "Open Door Policy in China." Sources for the explanations of these cartoons are included above under "Resources."
- 3.** Have students complete the questions included with each cartoon.
- 4.** Discuss the students' answers focusing on the key players, reasons for having spheres of influence, and the concepts of expansionism and imperialism.

Activity 4: An Original Political Cartoon

- 1.** Distribute copies of exercises, *The Open Door* and *Symbols for a Political Cartoon*.
- 2.** Students may work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
- 3.** Instructions to students for creating their political cartoons:
 - a.** Ponder what you know about the Open Door Policy in China.
 - b.** Use *The Open Door* handout as the starting point for your cartoon.
 - c.** Look at the *Symbols for a Political Cartoon*.
 - d.** Decide what you can use that will best illustrate the Open Door Policy. Create a theme you hope to display.
 - e.** Cut and paste/tape items on the Open Door to portray your idea.
 - f.** You may write and even draw additional images for the cartoon.
 - g.** Include a caption for the cartoon.
- 4.** Have students tape their cartoons to an available space. Students may walk through the "gallery" to see all of the cartoons. Have individuals or groups explain their creations. Determine the similarities and differences among the cartoons. Discuss the images used and the tones of the cartoons. How are the Westerners (and Japan) displayed? How is China displayed...did students resort to stereotypical images of China? How were other symbols used? Does imperialism emerge on the "good" side of the cartoon? Do any cartoons portray China as a victim? Which captions are most illustrative and clever?
- 5.** Include one or more of the students' cartoons for analysis on the next test. ■